



**Newsletter 18**

**Autumn 2018**

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## Chairman's Chatter...

Brian Sylvester



My: what a summer that was! After that very wet spring we had a scorcher of a summer when little appeared to grow in the cemetery and you could be forgiven for thinking nothing much was alive there: but not so – insects were in abundance. At our moth census on mid-summer evening no less than 43 different species of moth were counted. Dr David

Fitter, who runs the Moth Club at St. Bart's, was particularly excited by our "four-spotted footman", a species he's not encountered for over two decades.

Also during this period, a successful nature survey was carried out by Reading University School of Biological Sciences, and we're to hear the outcome from their PhD Researcher who will be talking to us after our very short AGM on 23<sup>rd</sup> October; so make sure that date is in your calendar.



*An Elephant Hawk Moth*



*Tomb of Mausolus at Halicarnassus*

During a recent visit to The British Museum I came across reference to the Tomb of Mausolus, one of the seven wonders of the ancient world. This was built in Asia Minor (now in Turkey) between 353 and 350 BC and was a massive 148 feet in height, its sides decorated with sculptural reliefs. It's from this that we get our word "Mausoleum" - an impressive building, housing tombs. We don't have any

“mausolea” in Newtown Road (we Newburians are far too modest!) but plenty may be found elsewhere - at Highgate, for example.

And plenty abound on the continent as our History Group Leader, Ros, and I were to discover when we attended (with our respective spouses!) a recent international conference in Innsbruck. This was organised by The Association of Significant Cemeteries in Europe, and included papers on related subjects of interest, mercifully all delivered in English. Some of these cemeteries are vast and employ staff to run and maintain them. I explored that word “significant” with the representative from Glasnevin who was kind enough to observe that *all* cemeteries are significant; and *begorra!*, he’s right. Each of us is unique, with fascinating historic stories to tell, and abounding with flora and fauna – in these cases size doesn’t matter.

I’ve already mentioned the talk on 23<sup>rd</sup>, and elsewhere in this newsletter you’ll find details of other forthcoming events – A Hallowe’en Evening; Tours of our Commonwealth War Graves (particularly relevant on this 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the “war to end all wars”); followed by an evening of appropriate readings. Your committee works hard to provide this varied programme: do please put these dates in your diaries and come and share in our uniqueness.



Would you like to know more about Newtown Road Cemetery and its fascinating stories? Why not talk to a committee member to find out just what is available and what more can be done to enhance this, our very own haven in Newtown Road.



And finally, our sincere appreciation to all who support our endeavours – to our owners, The Newbury Town Council; the committee; the webmaster; the researchers; the helpers; and to all who attend our ventures. We couldn’t do it without you. We may not be a modern wonder of the world, but we can all enjoy our own significance.

## REMEMBRANCE

*Brian Sylvester*



For the last four years the Friends have entered a display as part of the First World War Exhibition held in the Town Hall. This is a well-received and poignant event open to the public for a week around Remembrance Sunday and, if you haven't been there yet, well worth a visit.

As the Friends of the cemetery, we naturally focus on those either buried at the Cemetery or whose names are memorialised on

family graves but buried elsewhere. This we do year by year - please see the photo of a previous display, prepared by Deirdre Duff and Doug Larsen, with a bit of help from Ros Clow: well done!

This year's exhibition will test us as 1918 is the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of was described as "The war to end all wars". Besides three actual war graves for that year, we have four others for casualties who died after hostilities, plus a dozen memorials. Work is well in hand to commemorate these valiant servicemen.

Each year we also offer a guided tour of the war graves we have but, for some unknown reason, it always seems to rain on the day. And yet in recent years Remembrance Sunday itself has been a beautiful autumn day and the Market Square has been packed with people for the Annual



Service. 2017 was no exception but we soldiered on, grateful to the Newbury Mayors and those who braved the weather, as seen in this picture. One visitor was so impressed he asked if we'd give a talk to the Newbury Rotary Club.

So, in November do come and see our display at the Town Hall and, if you've not been before, join us for our tours at 11am or 2pm on Saturday 10th. This year there's going to be a heat-wave!!

## Facebook aids History Group research

*Ros Clow*



If you are a Facebook user, I hope you have found the Newtown Road Cemetery group page? All planned events will be advertised there, and you can 'share' to pass details on to friends who might want to join us. The page is at <https://www.facebook.com/FNRCNewbury/>

I recently joined another group 'Newbury & Thatcham Past and Present'. Often quizzes are posted: an anagram of a local road name; where was this old photo taken?

In September someone posted a couple of photos of our cemetery with the words "Newtown Road Cemetery has had a haircut". This prompted a reply from someone who had lived on

Newtown Road, opposite the cemetery, from 1958. Immediately I asked if he could remember whether the Dissenters' Chapel was still there then. Unfortunately, he couldn't remember.

This is one of the ongoing mysteries of the History Group. Currently Alan Vince is reading the Newbury Weekly News (on microfilm) to try and find the report of the fire in the chapel (if indeed there was one). He started in 1953 and is going backwards! He says it is boring!



*Albert Alexander*

Then Linda LeBlanc Willason told us "My grandfather Albert Alexander and grandmother Edith Alexander are buried there." A quick check of the burial records – it had to be! So I checked with her – yes, her grandfather was our Penicillin Man. I directed her to our website where there are photos of Albert both in his policeman's uniform and when

he was in the Radcliffe Infirmary after he had had his eye amputated.



*Edith Alexander and her daughter Sheila.*

Linda's mother is still alive and is delighted with our work. They all live in California, USA. Albert's daughter is currently being interviewed by two historians (one from Edinburgh and one from Oxford) about her father. She was only 7 years old when Albert died but I am hoping she can solve another History Group mystery. Were Albert's injuries from a rose scratch as reported on the internet or because he was on duty during the bombing of Southampton?

### **Remembrance events at the cemetery**

We will hold our annual remembrance open day in the cemetery on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November between 10am and 4pm.

As always, our "find-a-grave" facility will be available where we will try to track down one of your relatives' graves. We also will have 11 aerial photographs of Newbury Town and we hope you will be able to help us determine when they were taken.

This year's "Commonwealth War Graves Tour" with Brian Sylvester will take place at 11am and 2pm.



## World War Words

Come and join us in the chapel at 7pm on Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> November for a selection of poetry readings celebrating the lives of the 15 men whose graves are maintained by The Commonwealth War Graves as they served during World War 1 and died between the start of the war and 1920.

Our readers will be Jane Burrell, Michael Huxtable and Paul Shave. Refreshments after the readings included.

Tickets £4 each, youngsters 12-17 free. (Available soon). The proceeds from World War Words will be going to the **Royal British Legion Poppy Fund**.

## Monument Recording Group

*Doug Larsen*



We all know that our website has become a resource used worldwide for families doing research about ancestors who have lived in this area, but we've recently had an enquiry from a family in New Zealand which has led to a few unusual twists in the search for the family grave.

The enquiry began in the usual way with an e-mail request giving names and date of death, in this case of a married couple. The family had already found the names in the website burial records, so they knew they were in our cemetery. There was some urgency to the request because the family were planning a visit to the UK in September.

Things did not start out well because we could not find an entry in Margaret Pattison's monument records. It meant we had to report back stating we had no success in finding the grave – always a devastating admission.

However, not to be defeated they provided a photo of the original monument. This was good but still left a somewhat impossible task as anyone knows, who has ever searched for a monument; it is an eyeball straining task.

Then along came a person who does not recognise the concept of defeat; our own, our very own Chairman, Mr. Brian Sylvester. By searching through the nether parts of Mrs. Pattison's records he found a reference to a footstone that exactly matched the initials and dates of death of our elusive subjects. Not only that but we had a grave reference, turning an impossible task into a certain result!



So, with this reference and a photo of the original memorial we quickly tracked down the monument. It was looking a little worse for wear but exactly matched the shape of the original monument.

We also have images of the couple buried there, showing the type of clothing worn in the late 19th and early 20th century. (see photos left and right).



The family are planning to have a plaque mounted on the monument to show the original inscription.

Sadly, the lady who began the original enquiry has recently suffered an injury to her arm which is taking a long time to heal so she won't be able to make the journey from New Zealand, but her daughter visited Newtown Road Cemetery on September 20th. I attended with her as well as Joss Nankoo who discussed creating and mounting the plaque.

## **An unusual day or a bloody day in the cemetery**

*Ros Clow*

On Tuesday 12<sup>th</sup> June I was pleased to be showing a small group of retired Girl Guide leaders, Thatcham Trefoil, round the cemetery. They arrived on time, it was beautiful weather and we started out on the Introductory Tour. They asked good questions and were very observant – noticing the plastic bag of dog poo as we went past – duly deposited in the bin.

It was cool in the chapel and we sat down and continued talking. All very relaxed. We left the chapel about 4.00pm and I was dismayed to discover we were locked in. I should have let the Council know about the tour but twice before I had said that the contractors did not need to lock up they had locked up anyway. They are, of course, supposed to check that they are not locking anyone in, but the new contractors do not seem capable of rational thought!



No need to panic as I had the keys to the padlock on the gate. I put my arms through the gate, took off the padlock and then strained to slide the bolt. I caught my thumb and shouted

expletives that cannot be written here! Once outside I realized I had sliced the side of my thumb and I was dripping blood all over the padlock. The Trefoilers were of course prepared and patched me up with tissues.

I started to walk home along Newtown Road and spied a young, blonde, scantily clad woman lying in the grass near the site of the Dissenters' Chapel seemingly taking selfies. I was in shock from my injury and decided I couldn't cope with her at that moment and went home for First Aid and a cup of tea.

About an hour later Dave came home and I told him about the woman as I couldn't think how she would get out. He went back, she was still there, he unlocked the gate and approached her.

"It's the heat." She said. "When I sweat the glass comes out of my face". Dave looked closer. She was using her phone as a mirror and picking out pieces of glass from her face. Blood was running down her throat! "My ex-boyfriend glassed me. This always happens when I get hot."

Dave offered to call an ambulance, suggested she should go to hospital, but no. He escorted her out of the cemetery and padlocked the gate after her. She walked up the hill. A most unusual day.

### Subscription Reminder



Thank you very much for your support as we continue on this fascinating journey we have undertaken.

Even if, for whatever reason, you are unable to take an active role with the Friends, please don't forget to support the on-going work through your subscription. A membership renewal form and standing order can be found with this newsletter as an extra attachment to the email version of this newsletter. Subscriptions are due from October 1<sup>st</sup>.

### Notice of AGM

The friends of Newtown Road Cemetery AGM will take place on Tuesday 23<sup>rd</sup> October 2018 at St. Francis de Sales Church Hall from 7.30pm.

As well as the business side of the AGM which, as always, we will keep as short as possible, we will have a talk, given this year by **Meg Cathcart-James** called **Beetles and Burial Grounds** - A short talk on research being conducted at the University of Reading into the value of burial grounds in urban areas for biodiversity. Green spaces in UK towns and cities are being increasingly recognised for their importance to healthy ecosystems



and healthy people. Research and policy focuses a lot on green spaces such as parks, woodland and domestic gardens. Burial grounds are often very old, and very central in a town or city, but are seriously under-researched. My aim is to remedy this by attempting to quantify various ecological aspects, starting with biodiversity - this is where the beetles come in!

## Dates for your diary

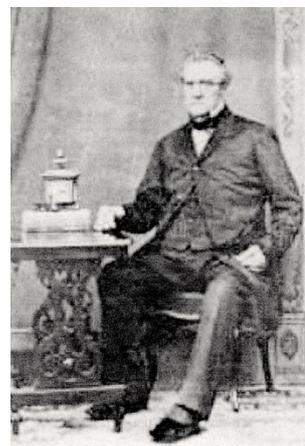
23 <sup>rd</sup> October 2018 (Tuesday) From 7.30pm	<b>The Friends of Newtown Road Cemetery AGM.</b> Venue: St Francis de Sales Parish Hall, Warren Road, Newbury RG14 6NH.
31 <sup>st</sup> October 2018 7.30pm	<b>Storytelling for Hallowe'en</b> Venue: The cemetery chapel
10 <sup>th</sup> November 2018 (Saturday) 10am – 4pm	Remembrance Cemetery Open Day Venue: The cemetery and chapel Please see details elsewhere in the Newsletter
10 <sup>th</sup> November 2018 (Saturday) 7pm	World War Words Venue: The cemetery chapel Please see details elsewhere in the Newsletter

## Contact from Canada

*Brian Sylvester*

We've mentioned in previous newsletters how, through our ever-expanding website, our fame is spreading. Well, we've recently heard from Canada.

Our good Friend Elizabeth Capewell has been contacted by descendants of Edward & Jemima Withers and has sent them pictures of the grave. In return we've received this ancient photo of the gent.



Elizabeth was able to determine that his father owned land & the blacksmith's (still standing) at Eastbury. He made an elaborate will & left little to Edward having given him the farm at Bayly/Bailey Hill Baydon.

Edward first married Sarah Thatcher with whom he had 4 children; then Jemima Tubb from a family of farmers at Baydon. They moved to Hill Green Farm, 93 acres in Leckhampstead. After the 1861 census they moved to Mount Villas off Newtown Road, Newbury, and on Edward's death in 1870 (aged 81) he left £800 to Jemima who lived on until 1882, dying at 79.

We'll no doubt be hearing more on this story, but if in the meantime you know about the family - or indeed if you are related, do let us know.

[P.S. Doesn't the table look like that of an old-fashioned Singer sewing machine (highly unlikely!)? But what on earth is that on top? Suggestions?]